

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3026
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, SA
SUBJECT: PLO AND ARAB SOLIDARITY

1. FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN ARAB NEWS ON THURSDAY,
APRIL 13. BEGIN TEXT:

2. THE KEYNOTE IN PALESTINIAN POLICY SINCE THE 1967 WAR HAS
BEEN THE SO-CALLED "PLAYING ON ARAB CONTRADICTIONS". FRANKLY
SPEAKING, IT HAS ALWAYS MEANT EXPLOITING DIFFERENCES AMONG
ARAB STATES TO GUARANTEE THE SURVIVAL OF THE RESISTANCE MOVE-
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MENT. THE POLICY IS NOT UNLIKE THE ISRAELI ASSUMPTION THAT
THE ARAB STATES WILL NEVER BE UNITED AGAINST IT.

3. THE ATTACK ON PALESTINIAN BASES IN SOUTH LEBANON NOW
APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN THE PALESTINIAN LEADERS REASON TO
RECONSIDER THEIR LONG STANDING POLICY. IN THE MONTHS PRE-
CEDING THE ATTACK, THE PLO BUILT STRONG TIES WITH THE RADICAL

STATES GATHERED IN WHAT IS KNOWN AS THE FRONT OF "STEADFASTNESS CONFRONTATION". THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP THOUGHT THAT THIS FRONT WOULD LAUNCH THE FIFTH MIDDLE EAST WAR. BUT WHEN THE ISRAELIS ATTACKED SOUTH LEBANON THE PALESTINIANS FOUND THEMSELVES FIGHTING ALONE. MILITARY SUPPORT WAS LIMITED TO AMMUNITION AND LIGHT ARMS WHILE FINANCIAL SUPPORT WAS MINIMAL. THE PALESTINIANS MAY HAVE BEEN DISMAYED BUT THEY WERE NOT SURPRISED. AS A DEFENSE AGAINST SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, THE PLO HAD ALREADY MADE A POINT OF DISCREETLY SUPPORTING CONTINUING CONTACTS BETWEEN ITS REPRESENTATIVE IN CAIRO, SAID KAMAL, AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT. MR. KAMAL, THE TOWERING DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, ATTENDED THE ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING IN CAIRO DESPITE THE BOYCOTT OF THE RADICALS AND MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS THERE WERE REPORTS THAT HE WAS ACTING INDEPENDENTLY BUT OBSERVERS OF THE PALESTINIAN SCENE WERE QUICK TO NOTICE A TIME-HONORED PRACTICE OF THE PALESTINIANS OF TELLING DIFFERENT ARAB LEADERS DIFFERENT THINGS.

4. THE EFFORT TO KEEP A WINDOW OPEN TO THE ARAB MODERATES, HOWEVER, IS NOT BEING MADE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE RADICALS. THE PALESTINIANS MAY HAVE BEEN HURT BY THE WAY THEY WERE ALMOST ABANDONED IN THE FACE OF THE ADVANCING ISRAELIS IN SOUTH LEBANON BUT THEY STILL HAVE A LARGER BONE OF CONTENTION WITH EGYPT AND THE MODERATES. THEY APPEAR TO BE FORMULATING A NEW POLICY LINE WHICH WILL SHELVE FOR THE TIME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEING THE IDEA OF PLAYING ON ARAB CONTRADICTIONS IN FAVOR OF A GENUINE PALESTINIAN ATTEMPT TO STRIVE FOR ARAB UNANIMITY OVER THE PALESTINE ISSUE. THE IDEA IS THAT NEITHER THE RADICALS NOR THE MODERATES CAN HELP THE PALESTINIANS TODAY AND THAT ONLY COMBINED EFFORT OF THE TWO SIDES MAY SUCCEED IN NETTING FOR THE PALESTINIANS ADVANTAGES AGAINST ISRAEL.

5. THE PLO REALIZES THAT THE ONLY PALCE TO MAKE A SERIOUS ATTEMPT AT PATCHING UP ARAB DIFFERENCES WOULD BE A SUMMIT CONFERENCE AND IT IS NOW PREPARING WHAT ITS LEADERS DESCRIBE AS A VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENT TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCE. THE DOCUMENT, IT IS UNDERSTOOD, WILL GIVE THE MODERATES MORE LEASH IN NEGOTIATING ON BEHALF OF THE PALESTINIANS. INSTEAD OF CALLING FOR A DEMOCRATIC STATE IN PALESTINE WHICH THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD CLAIMED TO BE A CALL FOR THE DISMANTLING OF ISRAEL, THE PLO LEADERSHIP WILL PROBABLY CALL FOR A "DEMOCRATIC COEXISTENCE" WITH THE ISRAELIS. THE PALESTINIANS HOPE THAT THE SHIFT, IF IT IS MADE CLEAR TO THE ISRAELIS, WILL ALSO HELP THE ISRAELI PEACE MOVEMENT ITSELF AND ENCOURAGE AN EVEN FURTHER EROSION OF THE REACTIONARY LINE OF MENAHEM BEGIN.

6. A VARIATION OF THE DOCUMENT MAY BE PRESENTED BY COMMANDO

LEADER YASSER ARAFAT TO PRESIDENT NICOLAE CEAUSESCU WHEN THEY
CONFER SHROTLY. THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT WILL HOPEFULLY CONVEY
THE NEW PALSETINIAN POSITION TO THE ISRAELIS WITH A FAVORABLE
COMMENT. BUT THE PLO IS NOT HOPEFUL THAT THE ISRAELI LEADER-
SHIP COULD ALTER ITS POSITION WITHOUT OUTSIDE CAJOLING.
IT HOPES THAT PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU WILL ALSO PUT IN GOOD
WORD FOR THE PALESTINIANS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND THAT
THE AMERICAN LEADER WILL THEN BE ENCOURAGED TO USE, OR
THREATEN THE USE OF, POSITIVE PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS TO
COME TO TERMS WITH THE ARABS . EMD TEXT.

7. COMMENT: EDITOR IS MAKING VIRTUE OUT OF NECESSITY WHEN
HE SPEAKS ABOUT PALESTINIAN "NEW POLICY LINE WHICH WILL
SHELVE FOR THE TIME BEING THE IDEA OF PLAYING ON ARAB
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CONTRADICTIONS IN FAVOR OF A GENUINE PALESTINIAN ATTEMPT TO
STRIVE FOR ARAB UNANIMITY OVER THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE."
FACT IS THAT SAUDIS, SUDANESE AND SOME OTHER WHO ARE
PRESSING FOR ARAB UNITY KNOW AND WELCOME THE FACT THAT
ARAB SOLIDARITY WILL CUT DOWN ON PALESTINIAN MANEUVRABILITY.
SAUDIS PROBABLY VIEW THIS AS ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE TO
ANY SUCCESSFUL PEACEMAKING EFFORT.
WILEY

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